

Dear members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of fully funding education by expediting the ECS phase to coincide with the federal dollars running out.

My name is Ernest Bailey and I am an Organizer with Educators for Excellence - Connecticut, a teacher-led organization with nearly 1,000 members statewide that seeks to elevate teacher voice in policy decisions. Every day I work with teachers in Bridgeport and New Haven. They tell me about what they're going through in the classroom and what they wish was different. Day in and day out I hear the same thing: a lack of funding, especially in our most under-served districts, is inhibiting teachers' abilities to fully deliver on the promise to give their students the education they need and deserve. Connecticut has the largest racial funding gap in the nation at over \$700 million dollars. This leads to deep inequities in the quality of education that students in these districts have access to. To help mediate this, we need to expedite the ECS formula and fully fund education by the time the federal dollars run out.

As an Organizer at E4E, I spend a lot of time with teachers and getting into the weeds of their classroom experience, learning which specific factors are most inhibiting their ability to give their students the kind of education they think they deserve. One thing I hear time and again is that teachers are understaffed. It is important to understand that, when schools are understaffed, it doesn't just impact one classroom, the effect reverberates throughout the entire school. Additional responsibilities fall onto other teachers, and the cycle continues. One way to improve upon this problem would be to expedite the ECS formula and ensure that teachers who are hired using federal dollars are able to remain on staff to alleviate the additional pressure that is leading to our current teachers feeling overworked and underappreciated.

Additionally, these dollars can be used for programs that help to support schools and students. Any programs that are currently in effect will need to be supported by funds other than those coming from the federal government when they eventually run out. If we do not plan for a process in which funding for these programs can continue, we are complicit in their deletion.

It goes without saying that all of these issues have been exacerbated by COVID. Staffing shortages are at an all time high and students are slipping through the cracks. In order to mitigate learning loss and ensure that students are able to continue to grow and thrive moving forward, we need to provide schools and districts with the necessary funds to continue to hire additional staff and support programs that are providing the connection students need in order to feel at home in their classrooms once again.

Teachers want to fulfill their charge and provide the best education they can and students want to fulfill their charge and learn as best as they can, but when we fail to provide them with the resources necessary to do so, we are not fulfilling ours. I urge state leaders to fully fund education before the federal dollars run out so that the next generation can be prepared to handle the challenges of the future. It's time for us to close the opportunity gap and ensure that all students have the chance to succeed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ernest Bailey, Organizer, Educators For Excellence - Connecticut (E4E-CT)

About E4E

Founded by public school teachers, Educators for Excellence is a growing movement of more than 33,000 educators nationwide, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

For more information, please visit e4e.org.